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THE NEWSPAPER OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY Published from : India Middle East

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# ATM 2016: Riding on high optimism

The Arabian Travel Market 2016 opens doors from April 25-28, 2016, at the Dubai World Trade Center, with focus on mid-market travel, luxury, aviation, technology trends, spa and wellness tourism, business, adventure and halal tourism.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

“ Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority is participating at ATM this year with high optimism as we aim to promote Sharjah as a world class tourist destination for the entire family. Sharjah has identified family tourism as a major pillar of the Sharjah Tourism Vision 2021, and offers the ideal destination where families can relax in a safe and welcoming environment. At ATM this year, Sharjah will highlight its latest tourism developments such as the Al Noor Island project in Sharjah's Khalid Lagoon, the eco-tourism sector, including the 25,000 hectare Mleiha project, the Wasit Nature Reserve and the Al Hefaiyah Mountain Conservation Centre. As part of our continued efforts to improve the tourism experience by providing innovative solutions, SCTDA will unveil at the ATM its new Sharjah Airport App.



**H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa**  
 Chairman  
 Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority

”

“ As a leading industry event for the region, ATM provides an important opportunity for us to showcase Dubai's ever-growing destination proposition to the international travel trade community, as we continue to drive tourism in line with our Tourism Vision for 2020. Together with our partners, we look forward to effectively utilising ATM's networking opportunities, and highlighting the reasons behind Dubai's growing appeal among a diverse range of traveller segments and source markets.



**Issam Kazim**  
 CEO, Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DCTCM)

”

“ ATM is an excellent platform and the largest travel exhibition in the region. We take this opportunity to broadcast and show the wide range of excellent and exclusive products and services of the national carrier of Switzerland to our valued partners. As Switzerland's official carrier and a globally operating carrier we will be promoting over 100 destinations in our network too. Switzerland and the Gulf region have very strong ties, which are continuously growing. We are responding to the strong demand on travel needs, be it for corporates, tour operators or governments. B2B marketing in highly dominated travel agency sales driven markets remains key.



**Mark Pey**  
 Head of SWISS Gulf & Pakistan, SWISS International Air Lines

”

“ ATM has become larger due to new market trends and destinations from this region. It brings together travel professionals from many countries and regions to Dubai for four days. The networking opportunities and the ability to meet a large number of vendors in one place are second to none. Online business has grown rapidly in the region hence it is expected more IT oriented companies will also showcase their latest offerings. At Al Naboodah Travel we hope to be making an exciting announcement later in the year regarding online business.



**Nasir Jamal Khan**  
 Chief Executive Officer, Al Naboodah Travel

”

“ This year's ATM will be a platform for us to highlight our existing and upcoming packages and promotions that will absolutely delight our guests. Our recent launch of the 'Summer Package' aims to drive room nights this summer and reach out to new and emerging markets for us like Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Scandinavia and the Americas. We have also expanded our presence at this year's ATM with a new duplex stand. This year is also significant as Gloria Hotels and Resorts will announce the launch of new hotels in Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia. Our main focus this year is on Europe, India, China and the United Kingdom.



**Freddy Farid**  
 Area General Manager, Gloria Hotels

”



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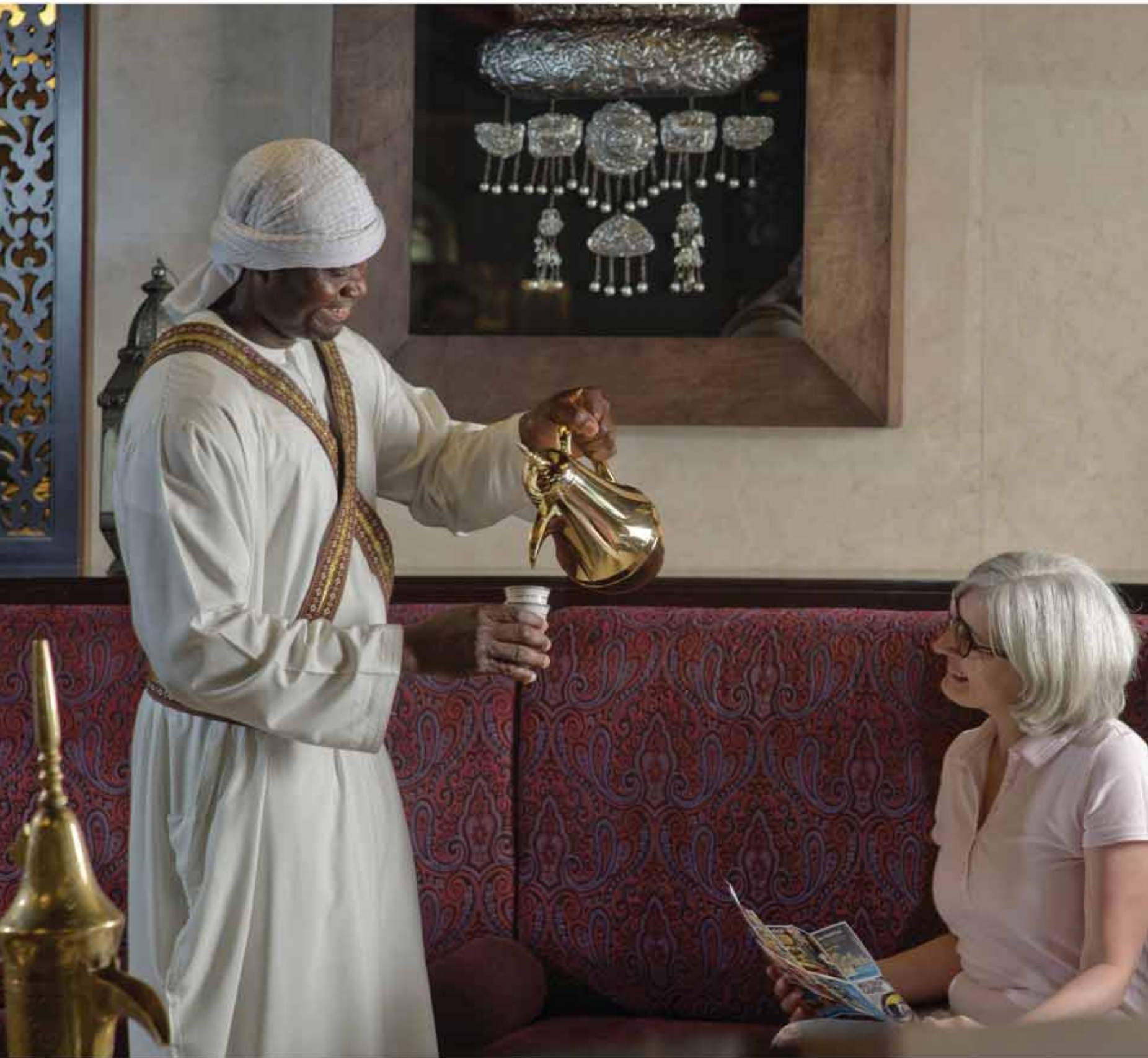
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# 100 Exhibitors to debut at ATM

Over 400 main stand holders and 2800 exhibiting companies from over 80 countries will participate at the Arabian Travel Market from April 25-28. **Nadege Noblet-Segers**, Exhibition Manager, ATM, speaks to **TRAVTALK**.

**SHEHARA RIZLY**

## What are your expectations from ATM 2016?

ATM 2016 will welcome over 400 main stand holders and over 2,800 exhibiting companies with more than 26,000 visitors expected. Exhibitors will represent over 80 countries while pre-reg-

every region and sector, ATM is a truly international event serving the Middle East travel industry. It is also one of the industry's leading knowledge platforms, providing global trends, innovations, research, insight and topical debate.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> annual showcase will look to build on the success of the record-break-

**In 2015 we recorded a year-on-year visitor attendance increase of 15% with exhibiting companies rising by 5% to 2,873. We hope to further build on this in 2016**

istered visitors will represent over 150 countries.

The main objective for the majority of exhibitors and visitors at ATM is to conduct business with people they would not usually get the opportunity to meet. Bringing together industry professionals from

ing achievements of its 2015 edition, which witnessed a year-on-year visitor attendance increase of 15 per cent to over 26,000, with exhibiting companies increasing by 5 per cent to 2,873. Business deals worth more than \$2.5 billion were signed over the four days. This year's install-



Nadege Noblet-Segers  
Exhibition Manager, ATM

ment welcomes an additional hall to satisfy rising demand.

## What has been the growth since the last show?

An additional exhibitor hall has been added to the total floor space in response to increased demand following the success of 2015 installment. In 2015 we recorded a year-on-year visitor attendance increase of 15 per cent with exhibiting companies rising by 5 per cent to 2,873. We hope to further build on this in 2016.

## What will be special this year at ATM?

New to ATM this year is the ATM Global Stage, located in Hall 8, which will host a plethora of high-level speakers covering a range of topics in the 200+ attendee theatre. There's also a Wellness & Spa Lounge – a dedicated space with up to 25 exhibitors created to connect Middle East wellness and spa buyers with international suppliers in a series of exclusive pre-scheduled appointments on April 26 and 27. A series of seminars will also take place within the Showcase Theatre. Another highlight is a valuable new networking feature for exhibitors and travel bloggers. The ATM Bloggers' Speed Networking will provide an opportunity for up to 40 travel bloggers to take part in mini-meetings with exhibitors to explore ways to work together in the future. 🌟

## Dubai Tourism wins @WTM Africa

■ Dubai Tourism won the 'Best Stand To Do Business' award at this year's WTM Africa, which took place in Cape Town, South Africa from April 6-8.

our diversification strategy, reflected in the more than 750,000 overnight visitors we welcomed to Dubai from the African continent in 2015. Dubai's range of attractions, experiences and events already hold great appeal



The Dubai stand treated its guests to a glimpse of the city's upcoming theme parks alongside 14 partners and stakeholders offering a comprehensive range of services for African travellers, including budget and five-star luxury holidays, hotels, tours and packages. The Dubai stand also featured a blend of heritage and culture and cutting-edge technology: guests had the chance to enjoy henna artists in the traditional Majlis and also experience Dubai 360, an immersive virtual reality tour of the city that allows guests to see some of Dubai's most breath-taking scenes and attractions without leaving the stand.




Speaking about the importance of WTM Africa, **Issam Kazim**, CEO, Dubai Tourism, said, "Africa has always been one of our key target source markets for visitors as part of

for families across all of our source markets, and with four major theme parks opening in the emirate in 2016, this is set to be significantly enhanced. At the same time, African countries have a lot of potential, especially given their youthful and increasingly prosperous populations that seek to travel and explore the world."






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Future global tourism hub

The Arabian Travel Market (ATM) taking place from April 25-28, 2016, at the World Trade Center, Dubai, is one of the most important global platforms for not just the Middle Eastern region but the world at large as this is one of the leading travel and tourism events of the world. Focus at this year's ATM will be manifold, on various topics such as mid-market travel, luxury, aviation, technology trends, spa and wellness tourism, business, adventure and halal tourism with panelists flown in from around the globe. There will be a special focus seminar on day one by eminent personnel in the region from all the emirates as they will discuss 'The Future of the UAE as a Global Tourism Hub.'

Comparing the visitor statistics and hotel development across the emirates it shows positive growth signs, with Dubai welcoming 14.2 million visitors in 2015; a rise from 7.5 per cent on 2014. There has been an addition of 6000 hotel keys in 2015 alone, which increases the total supply to 98,330 according to Dubai Tourism. Abu Dhabi experienced 4,105,846 hotel guest arrivals in 2015; an 18 per cent rise from the previous year with an additional 1000 hotel keys delivered increasing to 20,700 by the end of the year.

Travel wise, Middle East carriers recorded the strongest annual traffic growth at 10.5 per cent according to the International Air transport Association (IATA) which resulted in the Middle East surpassing its North American counterparts by grabbing 14.2 per cent share of international traffic. According to Boeing, airlines in the Middle East require 3180 new airplanes over the next 20 years valued at an estimated \$730 billion which will replace 30 per cent of today's fleet. This will further the UAE as a hub for many business and geographical reasons as it connects the east and the west together.

Social empathy deserves an Oscar

At the risk of being accused of being a dinosaur I have been trying extra hard to read and reflect on all things social media. I have paid more than a passing interest in every article I can find as I struggle to stay relevant in a digitally vibrant world.

The disparaging half-joking commentary of a household of teenagers does nothing for the self confidence of the silver haired 50-year-old marketer. It does serve to accelerate an inner thirst for understanding the digital media revolution.

Reading about how social behaviour is influenced by the value placed on social media, serve to explain, confuse then explain again. There does not seem to be any defining rules of engagement. Everybody has an opinion, born usually from a hunch or a casual observation.

Completely independently, I have been doing a bit of training on issues relating to empathy and I could not help make the connection between the value of emotional intelligence and world of social and digital.

I remember working in Abu Dhabi, when an internal story unfolded about a

little girl who lost her teddy on the first day of the holiday. The teddy "Oscar," was found reasonably quickly but the hotel team had the idea of building a scrap book to showcase the adventures of the teddy. Quickly the whole Rooms Division got in on the act. Oscar was photographed by the pool enjoying a beverage and relaxing in the spa with cucumber slices on his eye. The result-

gagement. Giving the teddy bear back to the girl would have been enough, but the memory of the "Holiday" that Oscar enjoyed at the hotel will last for a very long time. There was a clear emotional connection between the family and the team. The empathy was heartfelt.

The social media that followed was genuine and powerful. It was never

of the good will. It was all about the customer.

Telling a colourful story that has shades of vulnerability and has a hint of humility and a spark of humour has a significantly higher level of personal connection than corporate snap shots of price point and the push towards a "sell" moment.

The learning from Oscar's ordeal is that we should shine a bright light on every social media story.

Telling a colourful story that has shades of vulnerability and has a hint of humility and a spark of humour has a significantly higher level of personal connection than corporate snap shots of price point and the push towards a "sell" moment

ing scrapbook was filled with well-crafted and scripted photographs and notes of the experience of Oscar.

The impact of the team's efforts was that the little girl and her parents were thrilled with the level of hotel en-

planned but just happened. It is easy to overstate and complicate the digital strategy in 2016, but the real truth comes from the simplicity of the messaging. Taking Oscar to the Spa was compelling because of the authenticity



The author is Roddy Gordon Vice President, Sales & Marketing TIME Hotels

Workshop for Golden Tulip MENA



After the successful quarter of 2016, Golden Tulip Middle East and North Africa held the latest training session for the hotels in the MENA region about Central Reservation System, E-Commerce and Revenue Optimization Management where everybody appreciated the excellent service of the hotel. It was held at Golden Tulip Al Barsha on April 2, 2016.



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# 4-star boutique concept

The latest addition to the Fortune Group of Hotels is the 4-star boutique hotel to be launched in Dubai Investments Park, in close proximity to the new Al Maktoum International Airport, the Jebel Ali Free Zone Authority, and the Expo 2020 site.

**TT BUREAU**

This Boutique Hotel is designed by famous American architect **Reza Kabul** and located in close proximity to the new Al Maktoum International Airport, the Jebel Ali Free Zone Authority (JAFZA), and the Expo 2020 site making the property an option for both business and leisure travellers.

"Our growth plan is focused on Vision 2020. Our sales offices in London and Canada work closely with travel agents who remain central to our future growth plans in the UK, Canada and USA," states **Praveen Shetty**, Chairman, Fortune Group of Hotels.

The Boutique Hotel is designed with contemporary interiors, which set an independent attitude and exclusive

identity for the property; creating a personal characteristic and lively ambiance while simultaneously unifying the different spaces. The décor consists of sleek materials and earthy palettes with bold colour splashes. The 24 hour deli located at the entrance lobby has an Art Nouveau design element. A total of 114 keys catering to all needs and types of guests, this new boutique hotel hosts a mix of executive suites (4 per floor), junior suites (6



**Praveen Shetty**  
Chairman  
Fortune Group of Hotels

per floor), double rooms (14 per floor), twin rooms (14 per floor), and special arrangements are also made for physi-

cally disabled guests. Larger than traditional 4-star rated boutique hotels, the 450 sq ft rooms are equipped with the bathroom complete with walk-in showers.

& Oriental specialty restaurant and a rooftop Shish Lounge by the swimming pool besides round-the-clock in room dining.

The fabric artwork over the bed has been customised and handcrafted especially for the Fortune Park Hotel. In terms of F&B offerings, hotel will have Freddy's - its signature sports bar, an all-day dining restaurant, Indian

Automation and technology runs parallel to the design of the room, all rooms have IPTVs, and all rooms incorporate sofa-cum-beds to conveniently host additional-guests/children; easily allowing the space to be converted into a family room. 🍷



## A New Flair to Dubai Marina

486 luxurious rooms and suites offering stunning views of the Arabian Sea and Dubai Marina. The hotel is in a prime location and walking distance from the public beach. 'The Walk' at JBR and the Dubai Metro making this ideal for both business and leisure travelers. Additional facilities include Essence - an all-day dining restaurant; Range Grill Restaurant and Bar; BeWell Spa, a fully equipped gym, an outdoor swimming pool and bar, multi-function meeting & events space, Club Lounge, Café Azur located in the lobby and a hotel gift shop.

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# Four Seasons opens at DIFC

The second Four Seasons Hotel has opened at the Dubai International Financial Centre. At eight stories and with just 106 guest accommodations, Four Seasons Hotel DIFC is redefining the very meaning of luxury.

TT BUREAU

Situated in the pedestrian-friendly DIFC — home to global corporations as well as art galleries, shops, restaurants and night clubs — Four Seasons is the perfect pied-à-terre for those with frequent business in the UAE, an ideal base from which to experience Dubai's myriad amusements and diversions, and with its expert concierge team, a great starting point for a first-time visitor to the city.

"People who come to Dubai have often travelled the world, experienced the best of everything, and have extremely high expectations — at Four Seasons, our role is that of facilitator, to anticipate and exceed, to personalise and to delight in ways that mean the most to our guests," says **Carlo Stragiotto**, General Manager, Four



Carlo Stragiotto  
General Manager  
Four Seasons Hotel DIFC

Seasons Hotel DIFC. Most recently posted at the legendary Four Seasons Hotel Milano, the multi-lingual Stragiotto views his team of 200 carefully chosen staff as personal guest assistants whose mission is to make business travel more productive and leisure time more rewarding.

Every aspect of Four Seasons Hotel DIFC has been conceived with flexibility in mind. "No matter

the hour of your arrival, the fullness of your schedule and the length of your must-see list, Four Seasons transforms itself into your own personal hotel," says Stragiotto.

It begins upon arrival, with two separate access points — one at street level



for those arriving by car or heading out into the city, and the other opening into the pedestrian walkways of DIFC. In the upper lobby, Penrose Lounge welcomes hotel guests as well as local

businesspeople and shoppers for cocktails, tea and light fare into the late hours.

The Hotel has also created an exclusive haven for in-house guests just off the lower lobby — a flexible space where guests can host business meetings, or even set up

an impromptu workstation for the day. Light bites and refreshments are also available. The Monogram Lounge is open daily until 1 am, and is available for private events or meetings.

## 20% rise in exhibitors at RTF

Riyadh Travel Fair, inaugurated by His Excellency Engineer **Omar Bahaiwa**, Secretary General, Council of Saudi Chambers, has witnessed a rise of 20 per cent increase in exhibitors and visitors at the Al Faisaliah Tower in Riyadh. Riyadh Travel Fair 2016 provide Saudi Arabia's preeminent platform for domestic and outbound tourism promotion with over 250 exhibitors from 55 different countries.

abroad and looking for new opportunities to explore new destinations."

The 2015 edition of Riyadh Travel Fair saw 219 exhibitors with visitor attendance at 17,573. That was an increase of 15 per cent compared to the 2014 edition. Having a strong presence in this year's show were Abu Dhabi Tourism & Cultural Authority, Sharjah



**Bander Algryni**, General Manager, ASAS Exhibitions, says: "The 2016 edition is the largest Riyadh Travel Fair to date whereby 250 exhibitors from tourism boards, airlines, tour operators and hotels from 55 countries will have an opportunity to outreach Saudi Arabia's tourism industry. Outbound travel by Saudi nationals is one of the highest in the region with locals as well as expats constantly travelling

Commerce & Tourism Development Authority and Oman Tourism. Visitors were able to directly contact with the national pavilions of Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Kyoto Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Seychelles, Turkey, Orange County California, Bursa and Korea to name just a few.

## Park Regis to debut in Makkah

Scheduled to open by Q2 2018, StayWell Hospitality Group (SWHG) will open and operate the company's first Park Regis properties in Makkah Saudi Arabia.

TT BUREAU

The two hotels will each consist of 286 and 344 guest rooms respectively (630 rooms in total). This Park Regis development will be one of the latest openings for the fast growing international brand which has a presence in Australia, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, India, United Kingdom and Indonesia. StayWell Hospitality Group CEO **Simon Wan** said that formalising the management agreement for the hotels is a strategic move for the Sydney based company in entering the established Saudi Arabia market to grow its presence in the Middle East further.

"These two unique hotels will offer guests superb dining options as well as deluxe accommodation within walking distance of the Grand Mosque in Makkah. The hotels are targeting to open in time for the



Simon Wan  
CEO  
StayWell Hospitality Group

**Formalising the management agreement for the hotels is a strategic move for the company in entering the Saudi Arabia market**

upcoming Park Regis Business Bay hotel, located in Dubai. We are also actively looking for further opportunities to expand our network in the Middle East," he said.

The owner's representative **Riyad Alhoraibi** said, "Discussions on the Park Regis Makkah hotels first started at ATM 2015 and over the ensuing months the relationship developed culminating in the signing of agreement for the two properties just weeks before the 2016 ATM. We are delighted to be able to offer guests a range of accommodation in Ibrahim Al Khalil Street within walking distance from the Haram."

The opening of the Park Regis Makkah hotels will bring the StayWell Hospitality Group's portfolio to 31 hotels worldwide and 4 in the region and a step closer to the group's strategic objective of expanding its portfolio to 100 hotels within three years.

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# Family focus at Rose Garden

Being strategically located in proximity to the metro stations, Rose Garden is a convenient and spacious property in Bur Dubai and Al Barsha. **Abdulla Sharafi**, CEO, Rose Garden, shares details about the existing properties and the new ones to join this year.



**SHEHARA RIZLY**

The Rose Garden Hotel apartments has 200 fully furnished spacious apartments, completely equipped kitchen, flat-screen TV, free Wi-Fi, ironing, washer/dryer, central air conditioning, refrigerator etc in three different categories. The Studio is 38 square metres equipped with pantry kitchen with all utensils etc. The one bedroom apartment is 86 square metres with living, dining and separate kitchen with all amenities.

The last would be the two bedroom apartments with 126 square metres with two separate bedrooms; one with a king size bed and the other with twin beds and all amenities. It caters mainly to families.

Our hospitality division, 'The Rose Garden Hospitality,' was established in August 2006, with the first property in Bur Dubai which is self-operated management, with the aim of reviewing hospitality strategies and initiatives to raise productivity. The group's sustainable growth led to the opening of a second property in Al Barsha by September 2008. Even though corporate is our essential market segment still guests from GCC, Europe and Indian market play a substantial role to get our apartments filled year round. We have strategies to tap China and American markets. We value our relationship with travel agents and tour operators as they still shoulder significant revenue share. They started to go step ahead from traditional to online as they incorpo-

rated with current technology. Travel trade segment plays vital role in hotel business as they generate guaranteed bookings well in advance," says Sharafi.

Dubai is a destination which continues to attract leisure and business travellers with their continuous events and exhibitions. It has always been a top priority for business travellers. There will be around 16 attractions by the end of this year, which will drive more leisure travellers to Dubai compared to the rest of the world. Air connectivity with increased number of flights per day with competitive price attracts not only first-time visitors, but also encourages frequent visits to Dubai.

Sharafi adds, "The key to our sustainable growth



**Abdulla Sharafi**  
CEO  
Rose Garden

is, once booking is received we get connected to the guest before they arrive,

to know more about their preference and their special requests. Our foremost priority is to fulfill the needs of each and every guest hence we receive many repeated guests. Close proximity to the metro stations, spacious modern apartments and high standards of personalised service is our key for success."

Dubai continues to grow as the emirate has major expansion plans. To meet the rising demand, the group is coming up with a 4 star Rose Park Hotel by the last quarter of 2016, just a short stroll from Sharaf DG metro station & a 3 star hotel by first quarter of 2018 behind the Mall of the Emirates. 🏨





# 24 countries gather for MICE

With 750 hosted buyers from around the world, ACE of M.I.C.E. exhibition in Turkey this March attracted 318 companies from 24 countries. The buyers included a mix of corporates and agents and ensured intense business collaborations.

**TT BUREAU**

Congress, meeting and event sector's largest international gathering, the ACE of M.I.C.E. exhibition was held for the third consecutive year in Istanbul this March. 318 companies from 24 countries participated in the exhibition this year and thousands of trade visitors filled the exhibition area and attended various seminars and panels discussions.

**Volkan Ataman**, General Manager, Tourism Media Group and the organiser of the event mentioned that MICE industry, which has a very important market share in the world economy, continues to grow in Turkey every year. He added, "ACE of M.I.C.E. exhibition is one of the biggest gatherings of the global MICE industry and is more powerful and equipped this year. This year there are

318 attendees from 24 countries, this means an 18 per cent growth over last year. In 2015, we hosted 11,687 guests and this year we're expecting more than 15,000 professional guests. 200 for-

tion, in 25 different sessions, 62 speakers contributed to the educational development of the sector. Our exhibition continues its road to become the leader exhibition of world MICE industry."

"Terror which removes the international travel freedom is not only against Turkey, it is against humanity. We need moral as a sector and banks need to be very understanding because we need government



eign hosted buyers from 39 countries and 400 corporate hosted buyers from local market and 150 visitor hosted buyers attended our exhibition and in total 750 hosted buyers created intense business collaboration with B2B meetings. Within the exhibi-

While the exhibition provided the perfect platform to grow this industry and the strong hosted buyer programme ensured the success of the show, an underlying terror threat in Turkey was also addressed during the conference.

support at MICE. When hotel reservations are full, congress rooms must not stay empty," says **Basaran Ulusoy**, President, TÜRSAB. Tourism was highlighted as a facilitator to eradicate terrorism and help the country and economy return to its full glory. 🇹🇷

## Dubai Tourism safeguards brand logo usage

Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing will be working together with the Department of Economic Development (DED) to officially implement and regulate the terms of use for the Dubai brand logo.



His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri  
Director General of Dubai Tourism

The use of the Dubai brand logo across any activity must be approved by Dubai Tourism, through the application of a consent form to ensure its proper and authorised implementation. DED will ensure regular checks on all stores across the emirate as part of the Consumer Rights Campaign, as well as working hand in hand with Dubai Tourism to protect the brand by notifying businesses and individuals who carry illegal merchandise, and penalising businesses and individuals upon violation.



work together towards achieving our goals and targets for Dubai."

Director General of Dubai Tourism, **His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri**, said, "Through enhanced collaboration between Dubai Tourism and the Department of Economic Development we are in a strong position to protect the Dubai brand logo and safeguard its integrity. This formality is significant in helping to further elevate Dubai's exposure via branding, as we collectively

Director General of the Department of Economic Development, **H.E. Sami Al Qamzi**, added, "It remains a top priority to enforce and protect all IP rights in efforts to strengthen Dubai's reputation as a competitive business destination and enhance the UAE's position across global competitiveness rankings. We aim to do regular checks on all stores across the emirate to further assist Dubai Tourism in achieving its goals and ultimately meeting their 2020 visitor target."

**Dubai**

- Fortune Grand Hotel
- Fortune Pearl Hotel
- Fortune Grand Hotel Apartments
- Fortune Hotel Apartments
- Hyde Park Hotel

**Fujairah**

- City Tower Hotel

**Abu Dhabi**

- Fortune Hotel Apartment

**Upcoming Hotels**

- Omega Hotel
- Fortis Hotel

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## Aegean adds flights to Athens

Al Tayyar Travel Group, the general sales agent for Aegean Airlines, recently celebrated the launch of additional flights between Riyadh and Jeddah to Athens.

TT BUREAU

Greek carrier Aegean Airlines has increased the frequency of flights between Saudi Arabia and Greece, taking to three the number of weekly flights from Riyadh

It was attended by Greek Ambassador to Saudi Arabia **H.E. Khronis Bolakhr.**

Commenting on the event, **Abdullah Al Dawood**, CEO and Managing Director, Al Tayyar Travel Group (

the Middle East, as well as Asia and Africa.

Al Dawood pointed out that the Greek airline links the kingdom to many European destinations such as Greece, Cyprus, Istanbul,



and Jeddah to Athens. The inauguration ceremony to launch the additional flights between the two destinations to Athens by exclusive general sales agent for Aegean Airlines, Al Tayyar Travel Group, took place recently.

ATG), praised the collaboration between ATG and Aegean Airlines and the pioneering work of the carrier. It operates one of the largest airline networks in Europe and maintains an ideal location for linking Saudi with cities in Europe and

London, Frankfurt, Paris, Vienna, Zurich, Geneva, Rome and Milan. It regularly operates domestic flights to 34 destinations in Greece and 111 international destinations from Athens and Thessaloniki.

## Visual enhancement for agents

Etihad Airways and Amadeus have expanded rich content capabilities, improving the booking experience for travellers and travel agents worldwide.

TT BUREAU

Etihad Airways and Amadeus have renewed their Full Content Agreement that ensures Amadeus-connected travel agencies and travellers continue to have access to the airline's full inventory of flights, seats and other services. Under the agreement, Amadeus' expanded rich content capabilities allow Etihad Airways to display images of its product and ancillary services, such as exit row seating, so that travellers can actually see the airline's services on offer when booking through travel agents.



Peter Baumgartner  
Chief Commercial Officer  
Etihad Airways

will notice the difference and will be able to sell our award winning product well-informed and with confidence if they are able to 'look before they book'.

"This visual enhancement adds an additional layer in our long-standing partnership with Amadeus that enables us to reach corporate and leisure travellers all over the world with additional information, services and benefits. We pride ourselves in providing the highest quality experience

to our guests, and that includes allowing them to book their flight through any means of their choice and have greater transparency and access to our full inventory."

**Decius Valmorbida**, Vice-President of Distribution Marketing, Amadeus, added, "Through this partnership, Etihad Airways is extending its world class guest experience to travellers worldwide by providing them comprehensive access to its product offering anytime, anywhere, anyhow. Amadeus rich content enhanced capabilities bring airline differentiation and branding to a new level. Through our dynamic Ancillary Services Catalogue, Etihad Airways is now able to convey the uniqueness of its ancillary services offering to travellers and travel agents across the world's largest travel network."

## Integrated Travel System

Rezgateway has partnered with Aviareps to offer aviation, travel agency and hospitality entities in the Middle East a fully integrated travel reservation and inventory system.

TT BUREAU

Rezgateway's innovative and efficient system uniquely provides airlines, tour operators, travel distributors, Destination Management Companies (DMCs) and travel agencies the ability to create, book, manage, integrate and distribute multiple travel inventory, such as air, car, hotels activities, transfers, insurance and fixed packages, from one fully integrated system, resulting in cost savings of 30 to 50 per cent when compared to in-house managed systems, and more than 50 per cent or more when compared to other vendors.

Headquartered in Res-ton, US, Rezgateway maintains sales and support offices in Las Vegas (US), Toronto (Canada), Santiago (Chile), Dubai (UAE) and Colombo (Sri Lanka) with its client portfolio extending to the North



Mesfin Eyob  
CEO and President  
Rezgateway

and South Americas, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Asia and Australia.

Rezgateway CEO and President, **Mesfin Eyob**, says, "We are excited to begin our partnership with Aviareps. Aviareps is renowned in the industry for its in-depth industry knowledge and established networks. Through this partnership we aim to provide to local industry partners innovative and cutting-edge travel IT solutions that are economical

and easy to operate."

Rezgateway has increased its revenue by more than 62 per cent after adopting the Rezgateway system. Aviation clients who have adopted the Rezgateway system in order to effectively establish their own holiday departments and offers include: Oman Air, Sri Lankan Airlines, Air Mauritius, Ethiopian Airlines and Avianca Airlines to name a few.

The fully customised systems do not require technical or specialised knowledge to operate. Additionally, as the system is web-based, no additional hardware or software is required. There is no limitation on the number of users and integrations, and with the system being transaction-based pay as you earn pricing it is extremely economical.

## Rezlive Thailand at ATM

Jaal Shah, Group Managing Director, Travel Designer Group and Founder, RezLive.com, talks about their presence at ATM this year.

TT BUREAU

**Q Give us a brief about RezLive.com, its growth and future plans?**

We are a global supplier of accommodation, sightseeing and transfer services to our travel partners across the globe. Well-known for our innovations, global reach, reputation and trustworthiness, competitiveness, advanced technology and booking interface – RezLive.com connects travel wholesalers, online travel agents, tour operators and DMCs to the vast portfolio of global travel content.

**Q What will you exhibit at ATM this year?**

We have been exhibiting at ATM for the last 6-7 years and have always received favorable response from the local travel trade, which has motivated us to strive forward and present something new



Jaal Shah  
Group Managing Director, Travel Designer Group and Founder, RezLive.com

in front of them in each ATM we exhibited. ATM is a great platform for us to showcase our offering to our travel partners and get their positive responses and suggestion to take RezLive.com to newer heights. This year also we are very excited about the show as we will be showcasing most innovative features to the local travel trade. Furthermore, RezLive Thailand (an inbound initiative of Travel Designer Group for Thai-

land) will also be participating in alliance with Thailand Tourism and will showcase its offering at ATM.

**Q What are your expectations from ATM?**

ATM every year comes up with something new and exciting, not only for the exhibitors but also for the visitors. We are looking forward to meet our travel partners and suppliers and looking to further strengthen our fruitful relationship with them.

**Q Elaborate on your B2B strategy?**

We were very clear from day one the channel we have selected to sell our product and services to the local travel trade and same has worked for us. We have been able to provide better services to our travel partners and have got constant support from them.



# Germany on top for Rotana

German tourist arrivals contribute to 11 per cent of business across Rotana properties worldwide and 16 per cent in the UAE. Their recent participation at ITB was to further capitalise on the rising German guest figures.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

Rotana, one of the leading hotel management companies in the Middle East, Africa, South Asia and Eastern Europe, participated at ITB Berlin — the world's leading travel trade show — from March 9-13, 2016.

“Rotana has had a successful 2015 where we managed to continue on our expansion path despite tough market conditions, and we have a number of new openings scheduled throughout 2016 that will further strengthen our portfolio and market leadership. Our interest in Germany as a source market for our properties remains robust – highlighting the important place we believe this market holds in our wider growth plans. ITB has always proven to be an indispensable platform for information-sharing and



Omer Kaddouri  
President & CEO  
Rotana

networking and we were able to share our key highlights and future plans with the travel trade community at this year's event,” said **Omer Kaddouri**, President & CEO, Rotana.

“Rotana's impressive mix of properties that cater to a wide variety of guest needs means that the company has already established itself as a popular brand for visitors from Ger-

many. Our business from Germany contributes to 11 per cent of the entire business across all our properties in all cities and 16 per cent in the UAE — a spike of 13 per cent from 2014.

“With the UAE increasingly being chosen by German tourists as a ‘value-for-money’ destination, these figures are expected to grow higher this year as our diverse range of offerings, such as our beach resorts, continue to cater to their leisure needs. Also, a large number of German tourists look for cultural experiences to enhance their travels, and in Abu Dhabi and Dubai in particular we have a lot to offer in this regard. Our properties in Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah too are major draws for tourists from Germany, and we are looking towards high-level networking events such as the ITB to try

and increase the number of German overnight guests at our hotels in Al Ain,” Kaddouri continued.

Upcoming Rotana properties include Centro Capital Doha (April 1, 2016); Kin Plaza Arjaan by Rotana, Kinshasa (Q2 2016) — marking Rotana's entry into the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Amman Rotana in Jordan (Q2 2016) — Rotana's second Jordanian property featuring 412 rooms and suites and world-class facilities; Vazo Residences by Rotana (Q2 2016), Turkey — located on the Asian side of Istanbul; two luxury properties in Saudi Arabia — Rosh Rayhaan (Q2 2016) in Riyadh and Centro Shaheen (Q2 2016) in Jeddah — both located minutes away from the country's high-end shopping districts and business centres. These hotels will add a further 1,364 rooms to Rotana's inventory.

## Grand Hotel Tremezzo reopens for the 2016 season

■ The iconic Grand Hotel Tremezzo on Italy's Lake Como reopened for the 2016 season on March 11. Grand Hotel Tremezzo is the essence of Italian luxury, bridging the gulf between old-world glamour and contemporary style whilst retaining the ambience of a comfortable private home. This spring, Grand Hotel Tremezzo will unveil its new T spa,

and newly appointed the Rooftop Suites.

Occupying the entire rooftop floor, eight lavishly decorated suites are ideal for those looking to experience the breath-taking beauty of Italy's most famous shimmering lake in an unforgettable way. The four original historic suites paying homage to the timeless elegance of the hotel



where serene views can be complemented with soothing spa services for travellers seeking luxury relaxation. An 18<sup>th</sup> century structure with over 1,000 square meters of wellness space featuring five treatment rooms, a hammam and a finishing touches studio spread over three storeys, in addition to the breathtaking infinity pool and gym. The spa has been designed by architects Studio Venelli Kramer, the mastermind behind the hotel's T Beach

are elegantly grand, namely Suite Greta, named after movie icon Greta Garbo, as do the ultra-luxe rooftop suites. These new suites embody the style and personality of the original hotel, but with a more contemporary look and feel. Each butler-attended suite features a spacious living room, bed chamber and bathroom, as well as a private outdoor terrace with heated Jacuzzi offering panoramic views of Lake Como.




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# Networking to tap new markets

The travel and tourism trade professionals share their thoughts on seeking new potential markets in the biggest networking event of the trade where all continents meet under one roof, the Arabian Travel Market 2016.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

“ We are seeking opportunities to expand our footprint into another 14 countries by the end of this financial year. When it comes to the UAE, apart from our focus on technology enhancement and market penetration, one of our key focus is consolidation of leisure and inbound tourism into the UAE. We hope to enhance our brand positioning, reconnect with our suppliers, travel partners and clients, showcasing our new product offerings and learn from the market segment, upcoming new technologies.



**Albert Fernando**  
Chief Operating Officer, Top Travel Trip

“ In our region, ATM is the key event for Middle East's travel industry and as such it's a fundamental platform for Travelport to engage with our stakeholders and share important updates on our business and how we are redefining travel commerce. Our industry is growing: Dubai's Tourism Vision for 2020 plans to attract 20 million visitors per year by 2020, and international tourism arrivals or overnight visitors hit a record of just over 1.1 billion worldwide in 2011 with demand continuing to be strong. ATM provides an opportunity for us to demonstrate how we are truly at the heart of this industry, how we have evolved past our competitors and the traditional GDS model and how every moment travel is searched, bought or sold, we are there.



**Matt Powell**  
Acting Regional Director, Travelport —  
Middle East and South Asia

“ Currently Oman and GCC are the main feeder markets with Germany and France also contributing to our growth. We will be showcasing all the different properties, as ATM is the best platform for us. Whilst we expect stronger presence from the GCC and ME markets we hope to tap into new markets in the Far East such as India and China as well.



**Ashraf Eid**  
Group Director of Sales & Marketing  
Ayla Hotels



“ Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham Jumeirah Beach Residence will target family travellers, especially from the GCC region, during the annual Arabian Travel Market. Highlighting its newly-launched room categories – the Family One-Bedroom Suite and Three Bedroom Suite, the property aims to tap the growing family travel segment and reinforce its position as the preferred hotel accommodation in JBR. ATM goes from strength to strength every year and we are going to meet travel agencies, DMCs and tour operators for the leisure business/inbound to Abu Dhabi and discuss the rates that would offer to book them and to meet new TPIs to broaden our online GDS' channels. We will meet new wholesale and tour operators for new business opportunities.



**Samir Arora**  
Cluster GM, Ramada Downtown and  
Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham

“ We will reveal our latest loyalty rewards program that will be launched officially at ATM 2016. The TIME Rewards Extra loyalty program will incorporate a conclusive solution for all guests and TIME Hotels users. The Arabian Travel Market has played a major role for TIME Hotels in the previous years to drive great exposure and presence among the GCC and European markets which was translated into long term relations across the chain portfolio. This year we look forward to having a better feedback and response as we are competing in a value demand market that have we mastered in for the past years, while offering exquisite services and facilities within prime locations.



**Mohamed Awadalla**  
CEO, TIME Hotels

“ We will be visiting our local travel trade partners, overseas trade partners, MICE operators, online distributions to enhance our business relationship and to gain industry insight. It is a much looked forward to event which enhances our business opportunities and provide us new market potential as well.



**Thameem Razick**  
Hotel Manager, Rose Garden Hotel Apartments, Al Barsha

“ Ajman continues to add new attractions like the Al Zorah Golf Club, and we are maximising these developments to expand our reach by targeting golf enthusiasts and corporate travellers from different regions. 2015 has been a successful year for us and we seek to maintain, if not surpass our achievements by proactively



looking for new partnerships.

**Iftikhar Hamdani**  
Cluster Manager, Ramada Hotel and Suites, Ajman and  
Ramada Beach Hotel, Ajman

“ Golden Tulip Al Barsha is participating under Louvre Hotels Group expressing the company's modern image where we show our upcoming hotels in the Middle East Region in addition to our existing hotels, company plans. Golden Tulip Louvre Hotel participates as sponsor for the event. ATM 2015 was definitely successful and we met new business partners from around the world and we have successful business stories for the past season. We are here expecting more in 2016. Therefore, we are very interested to participate in this year event with stronger existence and showing our capability to continue the story of the success we are having in the region since we start.



**Tarek Lotfy**  
General Manager, Golden Tulip Al Barsha



# Discover tranquil escapes

Western Hotels managed by Al Marina Hotel Management, division of Al Marina Investment, will present two important properties strategically placed in Abu Dhabi – Madinat Zayed and Ghayathi, at ATM 2016.



Faiz Ahammad Assadi  
Managing Director  
Al Marina Investment



A weekend getaway from the hustle and bustle of city life is what can be offered at the Western Hotels. As you discover not only the property alone but many sites and activities which could renew and revitalise yourself. The properties are located in strategic points in



**ATM 2016 is the perfect platform to participate as it is the industry's leading travel and tourism exhibition dedicated to unlocking the business potential within the Middle East region, uniting key market players and business opportunities through these potential DMCs/tour operators and online travel agents**

Abu Dhabi. The first is Western Hotel Ghayathi, located 230 kms from Abu Dhabi in the Al Gharbia western

region with 248 rooms, and nearby attractions like the Ghayathi camel race track, Sir Bani Yas Island and Al Dhafra Desert golf club.

The second property is Western Hotel — Madinat Zayed, located 160 kms from Abu Dhabi with 105 rooms, and nearby activities to indulge include shooting club, camel track, horse riding, Liwa Fort, date plantation, visiting Moreeb, the tallest dune in the UAE, and the Liwa oasis town at the entry to the Rub' al Khali (empty quarter) — the world's largest uninterrupted sand mass.

Each property has its own heritage importance and

one can visit one of the many events and festivals throughout the year such as the Tel Moreeb festival, the pinnacle hill climb event for the desert driving enthusiasts and Al Dhafrah camel festival which includes the world's only camel beauty contest and Liwa date festival. There are many other interesting features one can discover whilst driving to the properties or even amidst them.

Faiz Ahammad Assadi, Managing Director, Al Marina

Investment, says, "ATM 2016 is the perfect platform to participate as it is the industry's leading travel and tourism exhibition dedicated to unlocking the business potential within the Middle East region, uniting key market players and business opportunities through these potential DMCs/tour operators and online travel agents. We strive hard to provide the highest quality of service to our clients who have helped us acquire a reputable position within the industry. With an ambitious expansion

strategy, in the years to come Al Marina Investment plans to have an extensive portfolio of hotels, beach & desert resorts, residences, shopping malls, restaurants and cafés. Years of hard work coupled with our knowledge and expertise has rendered us ongoing success within the hospitality sector."

Al Marina Hotel Management has established restaurants and cafés which have mastered in exquisite Food and Beverage concepts to experience delectable cuisine from all corners of the globe. Their services include hotel operations, e-commerce & revenue management, human resources management, market research & development, brand repositioning, design & construction.

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# Khorfakkan: A true beach escape

The Oceanic Khorfakkan Resort and Spa is embraced by white warm sand and gleaming waters from the secluded beach with breathtaking views of the stunning Indian Ocean and lush greenery in a setting of the spectacular rolling hills of the Hajjar Mountains.

**T**T BUREAU

The resort offers an idyllic escape that makes the holiday experience for tourists a pleasant and memorable one. Reopened in April 2013, this fully refurbished hotel situated on the acres

20 minutes from the city of Fujairah.

Offering family friendly accommodation, the hotel comprises 177 spacious guestrooms including 18 lavish suites and family rooms, 3 private sea facing villas that feature six spacious bedrooms, exceptional dining establishments, outstanding recreational and leisure facilities. Other family oriented activities include sports, sightseeing and tours, live entertainment and movie nights, water activities, one of a kind dive sites and so much more. This Arabian resort has become one of the

excellence award for 2 consecutive years, 2014 and 2015. Further to this the resort has been considered as the UAE's No. 1 Family Friendly Beach Resort for 2015 by World Halal Travel Awards that made this resort perfect for a quiet retreat or a family break and exemplifies a true escape.

General Manager **Ian Phillips** says, "We were very pleased with our performance in 2015 which was considerably up from the previous



Ian Phillips, General Manager, The Oceanic Khorfakkan Resort and Spa

**The support of travel agents and DMC is an essential part of our business and one that we work very hard upon to grow and develop. From overseas we work closely with partners who specialised in CIS region, Germany and Central and Eastern Europe**

of UAE's picturesque East Coast, tucked away in the coastal town of Khorfakkan, is a mere 90 minutes' drive from Dubai and Sharjah international airports; only

most leading hotel destinations in the UAE, being recently awarded as 2016 Travellers' Choice winner by Trip Advisor in addition to its surpassing reviews and a Certificate of Ex-

year. We understand that the markets have been a challenge, however we have a clear strategy with some very good business partners who have helped us deliver a very good year's performance. 2016 has started well, strategies have shifted slightly to allow for changing markets and I'm pleased to say that we are currently in line with budgeted revenue which shows further growth from 2015.

"We rely on a business mix which I'm sure is similar to many hotels in the region and the UAE. We have a very good relationship with several key partners, travel agents and DMCs and work very closely with these to ensure that we

are correctly positioned and able to achieve our expected room nights on a monthly and yearly basis. The support of travel agents and DMC is an essential part of our business and one that we work very hard upon to grow and develop. From overseas we work closely with partners who specialised in CIS region, Germany and Central and Eastern Europe. Our plan is always to ensure that we have a healthy mix of business so that we can manage any market change and political situations to avoid any possible impact to our business."

To further support its position and relationships with its partners, the hotel attends

along with roadshows across CIS region, India, GCC and Central and Eastern Europe.

As a group they are constantly reviewing their service and facilities along with our guest feedback, which guides them to ensure all the changes are in line with guest expectations, Phillips says. "Within the group of hotels we would



majority of the roadshows and exhibitions hosted by its partners and Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority to get closer to its business partners. Attending these take a lot of time and planning, however, this year it forms a vital part of their strategy. They are visiting COTTM, ATM, KITF, ITB, and WTM

like to think that we can offer something attractive to all travellers within our three properties. From city breaks, family getaways, business meetings, special occasions and family getaway's to the east Coast, we pride ourselves on offering a quality family destinations," he concludes. 🌴





# 1500 meetings at MICE Arabia

The fourth MICE Arabia Congress concluded recently at the Palazzo Versace in Dubai. Approximately 1500 one-on-one meetings were held during the two day event organised by QnA International.

**TT BUREAU**

Companies have utilised the practice of outbound training which has included the hosting of incentive activities and events to build employee rapport, teamwork, and communicate company strategies and missions, while present in an enjoyable environment.

Speakers at the recently concluded MICE Arabia Congress 2016 suggested that outbound business travel is fast becoming a core part of the outbound training, development programmes and incentives, especially for organisations in GCC.

Organised by QnA International, the fourth of the MICE Arabia Congress, focused on outbound business and luxury travel from the GCC.

Speaking about developments in the MICE industry, **Karthik Ramamurthy**, Head-Africa, India and Middle East, Ipsos Business Consulting, noted, "While business travel has been the norm for organisations across the globe, organisations with regional, global, and factory headquarters are adding a new dimension to outbound business travel by creating on-the-job learning programmes through industry immersion programmes. The travel is sponsored by the franchisee employees to visit the headquarters. This helps in the development of indigenous talent from GCC.

"As companies in GCC become progressively transnational and some regional headquarters take up base in the region, business trips for employees and partners are planned to provide a



**Karthik Ramamurthy**  
Head-Africa, India and Middle East  
Ipsos Business Consulting

**While business travel has been the norm for organisations across the globe, organisations with regional, global, and factory headquarters are adding a new dimension to outbound business travel**



**Sidh N.C.**  
Director  
QnA International

**It was great to see that the participants engaged in a frank exchange of ideas and thoughts related to the trends, challenges and new developments in the industry. There were close to about 1,500 one-on-one meetings, and 300 attendees**

glimpse of new cultures and an opportunity to learn nuances of doing business. In the context of multi-cultural teams, companies look at MICE as an opportunity to strengthen and build the team bonding amongst the employees and as a tool to increase the sense of belonging," Ramamurthy said.

A common issue faced by many companies in GCC is the obtaining of visas and ensuring halal food is easily available at the chosen destinations. As teams in the region are composed of different nationalities, securing visas for all those intended for travel is sometimes a challenge.

Speaking from a travel management company's (TMC) perspective, **Daniel Ponzo**, GM, Al Rostamani Travel & Holidays, said, "Availability of venues, meeting customer event cost expecta-

tions, last minute operational modifications and providing the technological interfaces, such as Apps, so that business travellers can follow their trip and interact with the travel company directly from their very own devices, such as a smartphone or tablet, are some of the more challenging yet necessary services that TMCs should provide."

"The two-day Congress imparted knowledge on some surprising and interesting developments in outbound business travel from GCC. It was great to see that the participants engaged in a frank exchange of ideas and thoughts related to the trends, challenges and new developments in the industry. This year's Congress ended on a good note with close to about 1,500 one-on-one meetings, and about 300 attendees," noted **Sidh N.C.**, Director, QnA International.



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# 250 exhibitors attend RTF 2016

The eighth Riyadh Travel Fair 2016 witnessed over 250 exhibitors from 55 different countries. There was a 20 per cent increase in both exhibitors and visitors to provide Saudi Arabia's preeminent platform for domestic and outbound tourism promotion. **His Excellency Engineer Omar Bahlaiwa**, Secretary General of the Council of Saudi Chambers, inaugurated the fair at Al Faisaliah Tower, Riyadh.





# Magnificent Greece

Ioannis Kalesakis, Founder & Managing Director, Magnificent, shares the company's plans for UAE travellers in terms of promoting Mykonos in Greece as a hot summer destination.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

Ioannis Kalesakis is the founder and owner of a luxury concierge company in Mykonos, Greece, named "Magnificent." Magnificent is a luxury lifestyle management service offering exclusive and personalised experiences such as extraordinary event management, private villas, exotic cars, yachts and jet service, along with bespoke concierge assistance.



Ioannis Kalesakis  
Founder & Managing Director  
Magnificent

always working towards tourism development and have currently targeted the Middle

"At Magnificent we are

East specifically to increase the brand awareness and have Magnificent services to be known to those planning to travel to Mykonos, Greece. We'd like to showcase our uber-luxury services with

event management services... etc. for our guests. 20 per cent of the total guests that Magnificent will host this year in Mykonos are expected to be from Gulf countries. It was 10 per cent last year, the figures

**At Magnificent we are always working towards tourism development and have currently targeted the Middle East specifically to increase the brand awareness**

the Mediterranean climate of Mykonos. The region is known for its superior luxury, and we'd like to highlight that Magnificent can offer them with that level, if not higher, of luxury in streamlining and creating fond memories during their Mykonos holidays. The beautiful nature, culture, history, cuisine and night life is blended with extraordinarily personalised high quality services, including private jets, exotic villas, luxury cars, extraordinary

are gradually increasing. The average spend of one person is around €10,000 covering all villa, yacht, helicopter once, private car and F&B services on a daily consumption."

ATM is a very effective platform bringing the region's industry professionals and travellers under one roof. Magnificent is planning to interact with our target audience and allow them to understand the personal touch in our services.

2.74 mn visitors from 185 countries visited Dubai in 2015

His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Deputy Ruler of Dubai, UAE Minister of Finance and Chairman of the Board of Dubai World Trade Centre Authority, has announced the 2015 annual performance results of Dubai World Trade Centre,

reviewed the company's 2015 performance results, and its strategic plans for future growth and portfolio expansion.

In his address to the board, Sheikh Hamdan, said, "Our 2015 results are not just a show of

**Our 2015 results are not just a show of outstanding performance but more importantly, reflect the maturity of the DWTC portfolio in being able to deliver double digit growth**

His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum  
Deputy Ruler of Dubai, UAE Minister of Finance and Chairman of the Board of Dubai World Trade Centre Authority

highlighting an impressive 12 per cent year-on-year increase in traffic to deliver 2.74 million delegates and attendees, coupled with a strong 17 per cent increase in exhibiting companies, reinforcing the entity's regional dominance within the global Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) sector and its dynamic influence on Dubai's wider business tourism agenda. Chairing the Dubai World Trade Centre Authority's Annual Board Meeting, His Highness Sheikh Hamdan

outstanding performance but more importantly, reflect the maturity of the DWTC portfolio in being able to deliver double digit growth with such consistency across its various business lines.

Backed by a prudent long term expansion strategy with strategic diversification of the event calendar, the DWTC business has steadily grown in number of events, venue occupancy rates, visitation quality and volumes, and in building Dubai's international attractiveness for exhibiting corporates and trade delegates."



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# SHARJAH the ultimate cultural and family destination



The emirate of Sharjah in the UAE offers some of the most amazing tourism experiences in the region with its authentic Arabian atmosphere and state-of-the-art facilities set in a family-friendly environment. Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority is showcasing the emirate's diverse tourism portfolio at the Arabian Travel Market 2016 as it participates in the leading travel and tourism fair for the 19<sup>th</sup> consecutive year.



Highlighting its distinct status as the cultural capital of Arab region, Sharjah is home to some of the most important cultural and heritage sites in the region. The most prominent of these is The Heart of Sharjah, which features architectural buildings, mosques and markets that bear witness to the city's development and evolution through time. The Heart of Sharjah has been registered in the tentative list of World Heritage Sites by UNESCO.

The emirate has preserved its rich past in as many as 16 museums, ranging from the official residence of Sharjah's ruling family for over 200 years to those housing art, calligraphy and Islamic artefacts. There are even museums dedicated to Sharjah's key status in the region's aviation and maritime history.

In addition to its famous Islamic monuments, mosques and public parks, Sharjah boasts literary and intellectual institutions that have enriched the cultural scene. Today it draws millions of visitors from all parts of the world with a number of cultural festivals, including

book fairs, painting exhibitions and theatrical performances.

In recognition of Sharjah's efforts to embrace its rich traditions and strong cultural heritage to create a modern tourism industry, the emirate was selected as the Arab Tourism Capital for 2015 by the Arab Tourism Organisation. Sharjah was earlier crowned the 'Cultural Capital of the Arab World' in 1998 and the Islamic Culture Capital for 2014.

Culture and heritage is just one element in the wide canvas of Sharjah's diverse offering for family tourists. The emirate has a variety of attractions for everyone in the family, from dazzling shows and carnivals to enchanting parks and stunning desert landscapes as well as scenic man-made lagoons and an array of cultural and edutainment locations.

Sharjah's outdoors have plenty of activities for families in charming locations such as Al Majaz Waterfront, Al Qasba, and Khalid Lagoon. Visitors can also choose to relax with their families in any of the nearly 55 parks which offer the latest facilities and amenities.

One of the latest attractions is the Al Khan Beach, the first public beach in Sharjah with multiple facilities and activities designed for both beach sport enthusiasts and sun-lounging guests. Tourists can also take a drive to Sharjah's picturesque east coast which is popular for water sports, snorkeling and diving. The east coast offers visitors camping facilities on the beach as well as accommodation in any of the motels and hotels that line the coast.

Another new development, Al Noor Island in Sharjah's Khalid Lagoon, has been attracting thousands of visitors since its opening in December 2015. The AED 80 million (\$22 million) iconic destination in the emirate consists of a uniquely designed streamlined structure inspired by the natural environment of butterflies. A key attraction housed within the island, the Butterfly House, is a nature-inspired structure hosting 500 exotic butterflies brought from Far East Asian countries.

Al Montazah Park, another new attraction, is a 126,000 square metre water themed park featuring eight pulsating rides. The park is distinct for its





**Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority is focused on new initiatives to take tourism in the emirate to the next level of growth. As part of its continued efforts to improve the tourism experience by providing innovative solutions, ATM will see the launch of new documentary film highlighting the various attractions that tourists can find in Sharjah.**

massive green spaces and designated facilities for children. For adults and children seeking an extra bit of adventure, the park offers Al Montazah Adventures which consists of a number of gladiator-inspired obstacle courses divided into different difficulty levels.

Sharjah has also established its presence in the eco-tourism sector with some of the major projects in the region. The 25,000 hectare Mleiha project is one of the most significant of these, the project features special guided tours to Mleiha's protected areas and gives visitors a chance to take part in some adrenaline fuelled desert activities.

Another new development is the Wasit Nature Reserve, spread across 4.5 square kilometres, that ticks all the boxes in terms of ecotourism, preservation, and natural diversity. The nature reserve featuring trees, lakes and salt flats attracts over 150 species of birds, both migratory and resident. It has a new 1.5 square kilometre visitor centre equipped with innovative technologies that allow visitors to learn more about birds.

Sharjah opened its Al Hefaiyah Mountain Conservation Centre, located at the base of the Hajar Mountains outside of Kalba. The Centre allows visitors to closely witness the

flora and fauna of the mountains, and highlights the strong connections between the animals and landscape and regional culture.

Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority is focused on new initiatives to take tourism in the emirate to the next level of growth. As part of its continued efforts to improve the tourism experience by providing innovative solutions, ATM will see the launch of new documentary film highlighting the various attractions that tourists can find in Sharjah.

With its constant efforts to offer new products and facilities that meet the requirements of all segments of tourists from every part of the world, SCTDA has firmly established Sharjah's distinct status as a cultural and family tourism destination in the region. The Authority is now all set to achieve the Sharjah Tourism Vision 2021, which aims to welcome 10 million visitors to the emirate in the next five years.





# New strategies at ATM

Turkish Airlines has been expanding its route network targeting new destinations. Ahmet Olmustur, Chief Marketing Officer, Turkish Airlines, shares the company's plans for this year's Arabian Travel Market.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

**Q** Could you share the growth strategy employed by Turkish Airlines during the past year?

Turkish Airlines has been continuously adding new flights and increasing its passenger capacity to meet the increasing customer demands in all of its markets. The GCC market has been one of the key markets for the airlines and has experienced a healthy growth each year. As a network carrier, our strategy for extending our network is based on having more planes so that we can fly more passengers and also target new destinations, both short and long haul.

We will have 339 aircraft at the end of 2016 and 442 aircraft at the end of 2021. Our fleet consists of wide and narrow body aircrafts (passenger and cargo) from both Airbus and Boeing. Such a delivery schedule is crucial for the wide expansion of flights and services all across the world.

**Q** How has this impacted the general tourism sector in Turkey?

Turkish Airlines flies to more countries and more international destinations than any other airline today. The addition of new flights definitely has a positive impact on the



Ahmet Olmustur, Chief Marketing Officer, Turkish Airlines

general tourism sector in Turkey, and Istanbul especially, which is strategically located at the crossroads of the East and West. At Turkish Airlines we like to embody real Turkish hospitality and our goal is to welcome tourists from all over the world.

More importantly, as the flag-carrier of the country, our expansion strategy is in line with Turkey's goals of bringing in more foreign investment and interest in the country through our convenient flights and top of the line services.

**Q** Explain the growth of the fleet and new destinations added recently.

We have reached a total number of 305 planes in our fleet, flying to 285 destinations across 113 countries worldwide with 236 international and 49 domestic targeting all the regions worldwide. We just included a new flight to Ivano-Frankivsk in Ukraine; and we will commence our scheduled flights to Bogota, Panama; Dubrovnik, Atlanta and Hanoi very soon.

**Q** What are your expectations from Arabian Travel Market (ATM) this year?

Our main aim is to enhance the awareness and perception of the Turkish Airlines brand with our target audience and make new connections by meeting mem-

bers of the travel trade with whom we could potentially have future partnerships. The event is always the perfect platform for us to highlight our newest features, ranging from our catering to our exclusive drive service, and our world-class products.

point in time. One of our aims of this year's event is increase awareness about the official airline partnership with the biggest Hollywood blockbuster of the year, Batman vs Superman: The Dawn of Justice which was recently launched in all

**ATM is always the perfect platform for us to highlight our newest features, ranging from catering to exclusive drive service, and world-class products**

We will also offer visitors the opportunity to enter a lucky draw to win air tickets to the destination of their choice, which should also provide a great deal of fun and entertainment for our visitors.

**Q** Could you share the total business transacted last year and the expected business this year at ATM?

The outcome from our participation last year was really good and we expect to achieve similar results, if not better, this year as well.

This will be our sixth year in a row at ATM and the event is continuously



Turkish Airlines Lounge, Istanbul

We will have some exciting European football-related announcements at a later

movie theatres around the world. Another key highlight for us this year will be the "Aviation Trends" announcement at ATM and in which our spokespeople will discuss all the major trends in the aviation industry.

growing in the region. It is particularly significant to us because it groups together all our key target markets; so we know that we will be in contact with the right people throughout the days of the exhibition.

## Touching new heights

- ◆ The GCC market has been one of the key markets for the airlines and has experienced a healthy growth each year
- ◆ The airline will have 339 aircraft at the end of 2016 and 442 aircraft at the end of 2021
- ◆ The airline just included a new flight to Ivano-Frankivsk in Ukraine; and it will commence its scheduled flights to Bogota, Panama; Dubrovnik, Atlanta and Hanoi very soon



**We have reached a total number of 305 planes in our fleet, flying to 285 destinations across 113 countries worldwide with 236 international and 49 domestic targeting all the regions worldwide**



# Flying high from Dubai to Toronto

Providing connections to over 100 destinations in Canada and USA, Air Canada secures Dubai, the most sophisticated hub connecting the east and the west to cater to a wider market.

**SHEHARA RIZLY**

Air Canada was honoured to be the first airline to land in Dubai International

Airport using state of the art Dreamliner 787-900 series aircraft when they started their three-times-weekly service from Dubai to Toronto in

November 2015.

“From Toronto Pearson International airport, Air Canada provides connections to



**For customers travelling to the US, US Immigration and Customs can be cleared at Toronto International Airport and the passengers can arrive at the US destination as a domestic passenger**

over 100 destinations in Canada & USA. For customers travelling to the US, US Immigration and Customs can be cleared at Toronto International Airport and the passengers can arrive at the US destination as a domestic passenger.



Our Dreamliner offers three classes of service including next generation lie-flat seats in International Business Class, a Premium Economy cabin and upgraded In-Flight Entertainment available at every seat throughout the aircraft. All premium customers are eligible for priority check-in, Maple Leaf Lounge access, priority boarding and other benefits,” stated **Deepu Cyriac**, Country Manager UAE, Air Canada.

Dubai to Toronto fares starts from AED 4,635 in economy, AED 7,695 in Premium Economy and AED 16,995 in business including taxes.

With their Atlantic Joint Venture partners Lufthansa group and United, they offer corporate programs which allow competitive pricing and also an opportunity to win corporate rewards through Partner Plus Benefits.



**Deepu Cyriac**  
Country Manager UAE, Air Canada

**From Toronto Pearson International airport, Air Canada provides connections to over 100 destinations in Canada & USA**

### What's on offer

- ◆ Their Dreamliner offers three classes of service including next generation lie-flat seats in International Business Class, a Premium Economy cabin and upgraded In-Flight Entertainment available at every seat throughout the aircraft

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## Action's 1<sup>st</sup> hotel in Brisbane

The opening of ibis Styles Brisbane brings Action Hotels' operating portfolio to 10 hotels with 1,928 rooms, a 92 per cent increase since IPO.



The 368 room hotel is the first newly built ibis Styles in Australia. It is on one of the most centrally located sites in Brisbane's central business district, within walking distance of government departments and the Brisbane Casino. The location benefits from excellent exposure to both tourist and business travellers in the centre of Brisbane.

The hotel features ibis Styles' signature stylish décor and upbeat furnishings throughout the hotel and houses a new restaurant and bar – Elizabeth Street Social. The hotel will offer guests the quality service they expect from an ibis brand including a meeting space with an outdoor terrace. It is the 10<sup>th</sup> and largest hotel in the Group's portfolio and Action's



Sheikh Mubarak A M Al-Sabah  
Founder and Chairman  
Action Hotels

**We are very excited by the opening of our first hotel in Brisbane. It is a high quality three star hotel and is well located for both business and pleasure customers**

first hotel in Brisbane.

Sheikh Mubarak A M Al-Sabah, Founder and

Chairman, Action Hotels, said, "We are very excited by the opening of our first hotel in Brisbane. It is a high quality three star hotel and is well located for both business and pleasure customers which will drive occupancy from day one. The opening of this, our largest hotel, is a big step towards achieving our goal of 5,000 rooms by 2020."

Mat Finch, General Manager, ibis Styles Brisbane Elizabeth Street, said, "After many months of planning, we are delighted to open our doors and welcome our first guests to this fantastic new hotel today. ibis Styles Brisbane Elizabeth Street is set to be a flagship ibis hotel for the region. Its striking, vibrant and playful design really sets a new benchmark for premium economy hotels and our team is excited to begin delivering unique and memorable experiences for each and every guest."

## DUKES Dubai in Q4 2016

Marking its first Arabian Travel Market appearance, Seven Tides Hospitality will unveil its latest plans for the beach club and update on DUKES Dubai on Palm Jumeirah.



Speaking about the new hospitality division of Seven Tides, CEO **Abdulla Bin Sulayem** commented, "Seven Tides International has been operating since 2004 and over the last decade we have been immersed within the hospitality sector, with a collection of luxury properties in London and Dubai to our credit, and this has given us invaluable insight into many aspects of the industry. Therefore, the decision to launch a dedicated hospitality division was a natural progression, which clearly delineates our hospitality portfolio from other investments, providing a vertical focus as we head towards Expo 2020 and 20 million visitors," he added.

The company, which believes in taking a uniquely personal approach to hospi-



Abdulla Bin Sulayem  
CEO  
Seven Tides

ality, as reflected in its hand-selected portfolio of exclusive properties, will also focus on continuing to differentiate the brand in the market. With the prime location on the west trunk of Palm Jumeirah, the city's most exclusive island community, leisure activities at Oceana Beach Club, consists of three outdoor pools including an infinity pool and lazy river, and a private beach.

In addition, plans are afoot for a new state-of-the-

art gym with panoramic views over Palm Jumeirah an outdoor functional training venue, and a signature sun spa. "This will broaden the appeal of both Oceana and DUKES Dubai, especially with the corporate, events and MICE markets," added Bin Sulayem.

On schedule for Q4 2016 opening, accommodation options at DUKES Dubai include 279 guestrooms and suites including a women-only Duchess floor with 20 rooms, female butlers, themed amenities and breakfast area; plus 227 hotel-managed studios and one-bedroom apartments.

During the four-day event, starting April 25, Seven Tides Hospitality will also showcase three other elements of its luxury portfolio, including the flagship DUKES Dubai London hotel, Anantara The Palm Dubai Residences and soon-to-open DUKES Dubai.

# Meet and network for MENA and Turkey

Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group invited some of the MICE specialists for a networking evening at the Radisson Blu Downtown Dubai. The leading personalities from 30 properties from different countries across the Middle East, North Africa and Turkey attended the event. There were great giveaways which included complimentary air tickets as well as hotel stays in various properties of the group.





## Air Arabia Jordan flies to Riyadh

■ The Air Arabia Jordan's flights will be operational three times weekly. This will be the airline's first expansion in 2016 and Riyadh will be the third Saudi Arabian city to be serviced by the carrier

spokesperson said, "We are excited to expand this year to Riyadh and continue increasing connectivity between the Levant and the GCC. We believe our proposition for being the best value carrier in the



Dammam and Jeddah. The flights will take off from Amman Queen Alia International Airport at 15:45 and arrive at Riyadh King Khalid International Airport at 17:50. Return flights will depart Saudi Arabia at 18:30 and land in Jordan at 20:15. They will be operational on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

Riyadh is the capital and largest city in Saudi Arabia. It serves as the main financial hub of the country and maintains strong business relations with Jordan. With a growing population and an economy that is diversifying away from oil and gas, the city's domestic market proposes a strong opportunity for investment. Commenting on the new route, an Air Arabia Jordan

region will attract travellers to favour Air Arabia Jordan as their primary carrier. In a short span of time, we have grown significantly in Jordan and will continue to do so carrying forward into the year."

Air Arabia Jordan commenced operations in Amman in early 2015. Dammam joins Jeddah as Saudi Arabian cities served by Air Arabia Jordan.

The carrier also flies to Erbil in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt, and Kuwait City in Kuwait. This announcement is aligned with its strategy of expanding into the Middle East and becoming a key hub of its parent operator, Air Arabia.

## Doha-Birmingham on Qatar

Keeping its long term commitment to the United Kingdom, Qatar Airways added Birmingham to make it the fourth gateway into the country.



The inaugural flight touched down at sunrise on March 30, and was greeted by a traditional water salute, Qatar Airways' Chief Commercial Officer **Dr. Hugh Dunleavy**, who travelled on board the inaugural flight with UK Ambassador to Qatar, His Excellency **Ajay Sharma**, were greeted at the arrival gate by Birmingham Airport's Chief Executive Officer, **Paul Kehoe**.

The addition of Birmingham marks the fourth UK gateway for Qatar Airways after London Heathrow, Manchester and Edinburgh, with the eight weekly services operated by the Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, **His Excel-**



His Excellency Akbar Al Baker  
Group Chief Executive  
Qatar Airways

**Passengers now have access to more than 150 global destinations, accessed via 73 flights per week from the UK**

lency **Akbar Al Baker** said, "We are delighted to commence service to Birmingham, our fourth UK gateway. This vibrant and economically

powerful region represents an important addition to our worldwide network and is a testament to our commitment to the UK. Passengers now have access to more than 150 global destinations, accessed via 73 flights per week from the UK, facilitated by smooth transfers through our home and hub, Hamad International Airport."

Qatar Airways now operates 73 flights per week to the UK, with 42 flights per week to London Heathrow, 16 to Manchester, seven to Edinburgh and eight to Birmingham, from its state-of-the-art hub, Hamad International Airport.

The Birmingham route is operated by a Boeing 787 Dreamliner in a two-cabin configuration, comprising of 22 seats in Business Class and 232 Economy Class seats.

## Turkish Airlines launch flights to Croatia

■ In keeping with its network expansion, Turkish Airlines has announced that by May 10<sup>th</sup>, the second destination in Croatia, Dubrovnik, will be added to their schedule.

With already existing services to Zagreb, Turkish Airlines now adds Dubrovnik, one of the largest cities in Croatia to its expanding network.



Dubrovnik flights will be operated 3 times weekly. Introductory trip fares are available from Istanbul to Dubrovnik starting from \$99 and from Dubrovnik to Istanbul €99 (including taxes and fees).

Additionally, for the first six months of operation to the new destinations, there is a special offer for Miles&Smiles members, with a 25 per cent reduction in the miles needed to redeem either award tickets or upgrades.



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# A new chapter to bring agents closer

Poised as one of the leading online B2B travel content provider, [www.toptraveltrip.com](http://www.toptraveltrip.com) caters to the needs of various travel agents by providing one of the most user friendly B2B web portals in the UAE.

## TT BUREAU

Top Travel Trip was established in the year 2011 with a focus of empowering the travel trade in conducting their businesses. Toptraveltrip.com was inceptioned in the year 2011 with professionals who have been in the travel business for more than 29 years. The organisation identified the gap between availability and distribution of travel content among the travel agencies. Therefore, the organisation formulated the way forward to bring the travel trade closer and cross synergies their individual strengths by embracing travel technology and introduced [www.toptraveltrip.com](http://www.toptraveltrip.com).

From the time of the launch, the online B2B platform was an instant hit, especially within the non-IATA travel agents. Technology that empowered the agents to do business at the click

of a button popularised [www.toptraveltrip.com](http://www.toptraveltrip.com). Subsequently, the portal remains the most user friendly B2B portal in the region. Ever since, their clientele has been growing leaps and bounds. Currently catering to more than 900+ agents in UAE, Top Travel Trip is continuously investing in

**Among our selling points which includes competitive pricing, personalised 24X7 customer support, etc., our unique proposition would be providing a 24X7 seamless automated platform that empowers agents to conduct business independently**

upgrading their technology and products to enhance the customer experience. This year their agents will be content in securing exceptional offers on hotels, holiday packages and other non-air products.

"Among our selling points which includes competitive pricing, personalised 24X7 customer support, one stop travel shop etc., our unique proposition would be providing a 24X7 seamless automated platform that empowers travel agents to conduct business independently. Apart from our hub which

is the UAE and a footprint in 15 countries, some of our top performing countries are Afghanistan, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Morocco, Cameroon, Nigeria etc.," stated **Anil Chandirani**, President, Top Travel Trip.



Anil Chandirani  
President, Top Travel Trip

Top Travel Trip has progressed as a multinational company in terms of their human resources as they employ people from various ethnic backgrounds. The employees in turn have the opportunity to work as a 'Global Citizen' with Top

Travel Trip. At Toptraveltrip.com, they firmly believe that customer satisfaction is delivered by satisfied employees. Therefore, they invest on staff training and team building activities which enhances the productivity and creates a very positive working environment as well. Currently, with the continued support from their valued clients, Top Travel Trip is ranked as one of the topmost sellers of airline,

hotel and excursion products in the UAE. With their expertise and experience they were able to win many accolades year after year. However, they are already on track to achieve more milestones on the way and continue to remain as one of

the most trusted partners for their valuable clientele. They will continue with their expansion plan, as they hope to further strengthen their footprint in the region and expand to 14 more countries by the end of this financial year. When it comes to UAE, apart from their focus on technology enhancement and market penetration, one of their key focus is, consolidation of leisure and inbound tourism into the UAE. They will be active at the Arabian Travel Market (ME4000) this year armed with many new offerings in the pipeline.

## Best Seller

- ◆ Currently catering to more than 900+ agents in UAE, Top Travel Trip is continuously investing in upgrading their technology and products to enhance the customer experience

## Kuwait to invest \$1 bn

Kuwait returns to ATM 2016 to showcase its tourism offerings, as investment into the tourism sector is forecast to touch KWD 276 million (\$1 billion) over the next decade through to 2025.

## TT BUREAU

Kuwait's strategy for long-term tourism growth received a boost in 2015, with airport passenger volume growing from around 10 million travellers in 2014 to just

(WTTC) report entitled 'Kuwait Travel and Tourism Economic Impact 2015', tourism accounted for 1.5 per cent of total GDP in 2015, and is set to rise by 0.3 per cent by 2025, although this is being revisited given the current low

per annum to KWD 2.4 billion in 2025, while business travel is expected to grow by 5.6% per annum to KWD457.3 million in 2025.

"Kuwait is focused on adding new high profile brands to its hotel mix as well as opening up the country with its expansion programme for Kuwait International airport," said **Nadege Noblet-Segers**, Exhibition Manager, Arabian Travel Market.

The country's hotel pipeline is also adding new value to the tourism mix with an under-development collection of new luxury and more affordable accommodation options. High-end brands such as Four Seasons, which will open its first 263-key Kuwait property at Burj Alshaya at the end of 2016, will be joined by the Mercure Kuwait (2017), Hilton Olympia Kuwait in 2019 and a Grand Hyatt in 2020. 📍



over 10.2 million last year as the Gulf state ploughs ahead with plans to expand its transportation infrastructure.

According to a World Travel & Tourism Council

oil prices scenario. This would take total GDP contribution to 1.8 per cent, or KWD1.6 billion in 2025. The report also highlighted potential gains in leisure spend, which is expected to grow by 6.2 per cent

## Discover Oman workshop

The regional workshop campaign by Oman Tourism and their partners which included Oman Air and many hotels and tour operators from Oman concluded recently in Dubai.

## TT BUREAU

Dubai was the last leg of the workshop that was previously held in Al Khobar, Riyadh and Jeddah in Saudi Arabia with a vast range of specialised packages on offer from mid-May to September. The Ministry of Tourism, Oman, along with its partners has now created a series of special packages at competitive prices and includes tickets and accommodation in various resorts, providing a variety of activities, authentic Arabian adventures and fun packed family activities and more.

Also participating in the "Discover Oman's Beauty" workshops with the Ministry of Tourism, Oman and Oman Air, the national airline, were a number of leading travel agencies and hotel destinations in Oman that included the Safwat, Zahra and Razan travel agencies, Al Bustan Palace, Ritz Carlton, Six Senses Spa Zighy



Bay, Park Inn Muscat, Al Nahda Resort and Spa, the Chedi Muscat, Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah and the InterContinental Muscat.

The workshop's programme included a series of activities including presentations by senior Ministry representatives from Oman and from its representative office in Dubai that was followed by a workshop attended by representatives from the various travel agencies and hotel establishments to introduce the special packages and details of how the Discover

Oman's Beauty campaign will be promoted.

Speaking at the workshop, **Salem Al Mamari**, Director General of Tourism Promotion at the Ministry of Tourism, Oman said, "We are now aiming to reinforce and grow the presence of Oman in regional markets where we have enjoyed constant growth and have partnered with Oman Air again to create this exciting range of competitive packages to attract even more GCC visitors during the summer months." 📍



# Travelport strengthens presence in Japan

Leading travel commerce platform, Travelport will further expand its interests in Japan with the purchase of its distribution business – Galileo Japan. Galileo Japan was previously owned by a consortium of airline owners.

**TT BUREAU**

Japan is one of the world's largest travel markets, and, in terms of flight seats



Gordon Wilson  
President and CEO  
Travelport

**This is a tuck-in acquisition of a business we know well and have worked with for three decades**

offered for sale, is only smaller than the US and China due to its large volume of domestic air travel bookings, as well as the international connectivity provided to Japanese businesses and tourists. It is also the world's fourth largest economy in terms of GDP.

The Galileo Japan acquisition means that Travelport can now establish a new, consolidated Travelport Japan entity in the country. All former Galileo Japan employees, including Managing Director **Yoshinobu Aoyama** will transition to the new Travelport entity which will be headquartered in Tokyo and supported by two satellite offices in Nagoya and Osaka.

The news of the acquisition comes as Travelport continues to invest and enhance its global Travel Commerce Platform through which it has established leadership positions in air

commented, "This is a tuck-in acquisition of a business we know well and have worked with for three decades. The decision to transform from a distribution franchise to a wholly-owned

whilst continuing our other successful strategic partnerships in Japan, will enhance our growth prospects in the country. We calculate that we now process nearly half of all international air bookings made by Japanese travel agencies and lead the market."

Aoyama, Managing Director, Galileo Japan, said, "We see this acquisition as a very positive move for our customers. Now, with the full backing of Travelport, we will be better placed to take advantage of the considerable opportunities that we see ahead

of us in the region. The new investment in our business and team means that our travel agency customers will benefit from enhanced services and support."

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**Gordon Wilson**, President and CEO, Travelport,

operation is commensurate with our goals to further expand our successful business across Asia. Japan is a major travel market and owning our operation here,

**We see this acquisition as a very positive move for our customers. Now, with the full backing of Travelport, we will be better placed to take advantage of the considerable opportunities that we see ahead of us in the region**

**Yoshinobu Aoyama**  
Managing Director  
Travelport Japan

**Enhance Services**

◆ With the new investment, travel agency customers will benefit from enhanced services and support

# 86% Saudis online

Experts have reported that consumers from KSA have become the world's largest online communities.

**TT BUREAU**

Surging smartphone penetration in Saudi Arabia is propelling Internet use across the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), presenting infinite possibilities to both businesses and the country's tech-savvy consumers, according to industry experts. Home to one of the world's largest online

communities, Saudi Arabia's expanding virtual presence has been bolstered by continuous developments in mobile technology, and the country's advanced telecommunications network.

"We have a relatively young population of technologically savvy Saudis who have embraced mobile technology as a basic neces-

sity in their daily lives," said **Faisal Al Bannai**, Managing Director, axiom.

The average Saudi consumer now owns 2.3 connected devices, with 86% of the Kingdom's consumers online daily, according to Google's latest Saudi Arabia Connected Consumer Survey. In addition, about 9 out of 10 Saudis own a smart-



phone, an impressive 26% increase over the last three years, and 86% of Saudis go online at least as often via smartphone as a computer, a whopping 42% increase since 2012.

"The smartphone has essentially become the must-have tool for remote

access to information," says Al Bannai. "In a single compact device, you can place calls, send emails and texts, take photos, find a location – what other device allows you to do perform all these functions? At axiom we are constantly releasing new technologies with life-enhancing capabilities, and

it has become clear that the possibilities of mobile technology are infinite."

A whopping 89% of Saudis use their smartphones while watching TV, according to the Google survey. Meanwhile, 77% watch videos on their smartphone at least weekly, 69% reported making their last purchase on a smartphone, and 71% said they use their smartphones to search for local businesses.

For KSA technology mavens, smartphones are just the beginning of an ever-growing universe of mobile connectivity, added Al Bannai.

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# On the sustainability track

Iftikhar Hamdani, General Manager, Ramada Hotel and Suites Ajman, writes about the journey of achieving sustainability for the property over the years.

Sustainability is an essential aspect of our hotel operations. We have started making a name for ourselves and achieve a strong presence in the Northern Emirates in terms of green initiatives. In 2015, ours became

lines for all new and existing properties on the importance and course of actions on sustainability. I have been fortunate to be presented with opportunities to share our green projects and emphasize their importance on various

Ajman has become a model of sustainability and currently, our role is to create awareness on how everyone can play their part. We welcome everyone to visit our property and witness the projects first-hand – from the zero landfill,



Launch of Biodiesel Project at Ramada Ajman

the first property in Ajman to secure the prestigious Green Globe Certification. It was a team effort and all departments, especially the Engineering Department, have worked hard and acquired new learning on sustainability measures during the process.

Recently, I have been invited by The First Group Asset Management Company to speak during their launch of 'The Hoteliers' Guide to Going Green,' which provides guide-

forums and platforms, in the UAE and internationally.

A year ago, I was invited during the World Travel Market exhibition in London to be part of a roundtable discussion on sustainability. In addition, I got a chance to speak to the students of Padua University in Italy to discuss our initiatives. We continue to receive requests here and abroad to share our journey toward sustainability.

Ramada Hotel & Suites

urban farm, and our new sustainability schemes: the cooking oil to biodiesel and the new Reverse Osmosis plant.

## New Green Initiatives

Waste means money. Some countries, like Sweden, even imports waste to be converted into fuel. Before, approximately 4,350 gallons of used cooking oil was going to waste. This used cooking oil can actually be converted to biodegradable biodiesel, not just by half but the entire 100 per cent. Now, our



Iftikhar Hamdani at Padua University in Italy

**Ramada Hotel & Suites Ajman has become a model of sustainability and currently, our role is to create awareness on how everyone can play their part. We welcome everyone to visit our property and witness the projects first-hand**

hotel is collecting the used cooking oil and giving it to our partner company for conversion to biodiesel.

We also recently launched our water-saving initiative through a new Reverse Osmosis Plant, which

will give us an annual savings of AED 290,000. The hotel's daily water supply is 67,000 gallons; 17,000 gallons go to waste due to high level of TDS (Total Dissolved Solid). The hotel operations require at least 60,000 gallons of water per day, thus generating

a supply deficit. Through the new RO plant, approximately 10,000 gallons of waste water will be filtered and treated to bring down the TDS level and make the water suitable for use in the hotel's gardens and urban farm.

## Challenges and course of action

Training the staff as a team to be part of this venture in sustainability was initially a challenge, but today the process has been smooth as everyone takes responsibility for their own actions.

The biggest challenge, not just for us, but all hotels worldwide would be the way to educate and encourage the guests in the process. Some-time ago, I was given reward points for saving linen and towels throughout my stay at a hotel.

These little steps and programs can make impacts to create awareness on recycling and water and energy conservation to save our planet. On a local scale, for Ajman Municipality, they offer a lot of support to those willing to convert their waste and are currently working on a video for waste management. 🌱



Launch of RO project



# Total hospitality management solutions

Tierra Mar has been able to prove themselves as one of the leading B2B complete solution providers in the region.



Specialists in the industry of hospitality always look out for great dividends within a specified time span. In order to acquire maximum benefits the ideal partner should look out for a comprehensive service solution provider who could plan out, implement and deliver on time. Employees play a pivotal role in the hospitality trade and making certain that you find the correct employee with the correct attitude and expertise is just one part of their many roles. Tierra Mar is a complete solution provider for B2B companies seeking human resource expertise, profitability, vertically integrated marketing programs, hospitality consultancy and advisory among many others in their portfolio. Their ability to undertake hotel management, risk management,

hotel turn-key solutions, hotel auditing, conducting feasibility studies, procurement, business transition, branding, financing facilities, network and outreach are just a few notable services offered from the plethora of expertise offered to make your business more lucra-

**Tierra Mar is proficient in providing services in the fields of marketing, human resources, equipping hotels, management, structuring, branding, financial models, conducting feasibility studies, building plans for hotel purposes, resources of hotel business and maximizing revenues**

tive in every aspect, making sure the dividends are much keener than your investment.

The affiliation services and operational strategy to maintain a sustained growth without compromising qual-

ity and standard of service to enhance the performance of any property alongside providing building renovation, interior design and furnishing with their highly efficient team of specialised designers for both construction and renovations with a highly competitive pricing will assure

great value for your commercial enterprise. **Mahmoud Hamza**, Owner/CEO, Tierra Mar Management Consultancy, and his squad are well equipped with experience and expertise to cater to the wider markets which emerge.

They have established a vertically integrate marketing platform for delivering revenues to their businesses which include local leisure and corporate sales agents, hotel based reservation department and experienced regional sales managers.

They have also set up an efficient network of investors across the world. The author of their reasonable capital enables them to manage resources needed for specific investments. One of the key elements of their success is the ability to build a brand that is strong enough to read market visibility and flexible enough to evaluate the market of local business.

Another noteworthy aspect in their portfolio is the relationship based on specific affiliations where the achieved results add value to the customer. Staffing and

labour supply is another key feature in their profile. As one of the best hospitality management companies in the UAE they are committed to furnish a suitable working environment so that every employee associated with their business can derive job satisfaction and a genuine sense of pride.

They consider it their prime responsibility to create a congenial working atmosphere so that everyone within their organization can achieve his or her utmost potential. They provide skilled work force depending on the needs and requisites of their clients and the professionals they arrange are fully trained and have become seasoned

in the hospitality industry and willing to serve with their full esteem. They will provide solutions and the best possible methods to deal with crisis situations which is a big challenge for some of the proprietors or managers.



Mahmoud Hamza  
Owner/CEO, Tierra Mar Management Consultancy



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# Connecting key trade leaders

Arabian Hotel Investment Conference (AHIC) will be held at Madinat Jumeirah Dubai from April 26-28, 2016. The patron of the event is **His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum**, Chairman, Dubai Airports, President of Dubai Department for Civil Aviation and Chairman and CEO of Emirates. **Jennifer Pettinger-Haines**, Managing Director Middle East-Bench Events (co-organisers of AHIC 2016 with MEED) shares details about the event.



## Q What are your expectations from the event this year?

AHIC 2016 looks to be one of our best and most crucial events yet. With all the macroeconomic, geopolitical and security factors affecting the region, we have listened diligently to the numerous questions and concerns that are being raised by our industry. With the help of our advisory board we have put together an agenda that aims to provide answers and solutions to the industry in a period of high uncertainty. We are anticipating a lot of critical discussions to take place and shed some light on what to expect for the future.

## Q What are the targeted markets and who are the key players?

AHIC focuses on markets from the GCC and wider Middle East re-

gion, while including international markets from Europe, Africa, and Asia. With the lifting of economic sanctions on Iran, AHIC will pay special attention to the opportuni-

**With the help of our advisory board we have put together an agenda that aims to provide answers and solutions to the industry in a period of high uncertainty. We are anticipating a lot of critical discussions to take place and shed some light on what to expect for the future**

ties emerging in the second-largest economy in the Middle East region. The programme will also focus on the performance and pipeline for Egypt, and the impact of oil prices on Saudi Arabia's tourism investment and flows.

## Q How does AHIC contribute to the growth of the region?

AHIC is an expert driven, peer-designed conference, providing attendees with a platform to reinforce relationships, hear from industry's most senior executives, and create

new business opportunities. In the words of our chairman **Jonathan Worsley**, "With so many critical factors influencing our industry simultaneously, there is no certain future other than the one we create." We are happy to deliver a conference that facilitates collaboration within the industry which works to create a better future.

## Q How is this year different from last year?

New challenges have emerged in the past year with operator consolidation, downward pressure on rates and an expected spike in supply facing the industry. We have devised a programme that will focus on these key issues and encourage conversation on oil prices, security and travel and tourism trends. The conference will kick off with hard-hitting sessions on the uncertainty of the present while looking ahead at the opportunities and challenges of the future.

With more keynote presentations and high-profile panel discussions than ever before, AHIC 2016 is bringing in more than 30 new speakers to share their insights on the shape and direction of the tourism and hotel sectors. While still covering regional industry topics, AHIC 2016 will also host speakers from outside the industry to provide fresh perspec-



Jennifer Pettinger-Haines  
Managing Director Middle East  
Bench Events

tives on the global forces shaping the region. Amongst other things, this year we are delighted to have interviews with a variety of leaders, such as **His Excellency Maithripala Sirisena**, President, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, amongst others for an exclusive insight into their visions for the future. 🇸🇰

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**Rotana**

**Ras Al Khaimah & Fujairah**

Rotana has appointed **Betty Riachy** as the new Cluster Director of Marketing and Communications for The Cove Rotana Resort – Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah Rotana Resort & Spa Al Aqaa. Riachy joined Rotana in 2008 and held marketing and communications roles with several Rotana properties in Dubai, with her handling the marketing and communications departments in many of Rotana's key properties in the United Arab Emirates. She will oversee both properties handling hotel's marketing and communications strategies, expanding the success of both properties in the market, focusing on many CSR initiatives and strengthening the brand awareness.



**Rezlive**

**India**

**Anand Desai** has been appointed as Group CIO for Rezlive.com (Travel Designer Group). He comes with more than 18 years of experience in IT industry. In his previous assignments he has played key leadership roles in organisations like Reuters and Credit Suisse working across locations: New York, Zurich, London, Singapore & India. With his proficiency in technology, management and operations he aims to take Rezlive.com platform to the next level by scaling up operations and expanding its technological capabilities.



**Ethiopian Airlines**

**Dubai**

Ethiopian Airlines has appointed **Ali Mohammed** as its new Regional Director for Gulf and Pakistan. Mohammed joined Ethiopian Airlines in the year 1999 as Customer Service Agent and served in various departments of sales after which he transferred as a Customer Complaint Resolution officer. Mohammed formerly served as the Area Manager for Kuwait station and as the Regional Director for Gulf and Pakistan will be based in Dubai.



**Satguru Travel Group**

**Dubai**

**Russell C. Gonzales** has joined Satguru Travel Group as Head of Product Development (Non Air). A veteran and energetic online travel agent professional with almost 20 years of concrete international working experiences which covers Asia, Northern America and Middle East and has held various top management positions in Asiatravel.com Holdings, a public listed company in Singapore. Gonzales is set to pioneer the advancement of hotels and tours portfolio of all the business sectors of the company.



**Top Travel Trip**

**UAE**

**Rajil Sudhakaran** has been appointed as General Manager-UAE for Top Travel Trip, an online B2B portal in the region. Sudhakaran comes with more than 20 years of experience in travel & tourism industry. Apart from working for some airlines, Sudhakaran has worked with some of the biggest travel consolidators in India. Through his previous assignments, he has rich experience of launching and managing various segments of travel & tourism.



**DoubleTree by Hilton Resort & Spa Marjan Island**

**Ras Al Khaimah**

DoubleTree by Hilton Resort & Spa Marjan Island has appointed **Nader Halim** as General Manager. Egypt-born Nader Halim has enjoyed a long international hospitality career spanning 18 years. A graduate of the Faculty of Tourism & Hotels at Helwan University in Cairo, Halim's career started as a sales executive with a number of international hospitality company's before joining Hilton Worldwide in 2002 as Sales Manager at Hilton Al Ain.



**Hyatt Regency Dubai Creek Heights**

**Dubai**

**Asif Raza** has been appointed as the Executive Assistant Manager of the Hyatt Regency Dubai Creek Heights. In his new role, Raza will be managing the sales operations and cluster teams. Raza began his career with Hyatt Regency Jeddah in 2001 as a Sales manager. He moved to Grand Hyatt Muscat in September 2003 as a Sales manager and was promoted to Associate Director of Sales in 2007. Raza progressed to being a part of the pre-opening team for Park Hyatt Jeddah, where he held the role of Director of Sales and Marketing. With over 15 years' experience with Hyatt, he led the pre-opening of the Hyatt Regency Riyadh-Olaya.



**Wyndham Dubai Marina**

**Dubai**

**Tatenda Gareth Mutunga** has been appointed as Assistant Marketing & Communications Manager for the first Wyndham Hotels & Resorts property in the UAE located in Dubai Marina. He brings over seven years' experience in the hospitality industry during his time in Switzerland and the UAE. Mutunga comes with a diverse background from hotel operations to the commercial aspects and takes on the new challenge of managing all marketing and communications initiatives.



**Fatma Mohamed Abdul Hameed** is the Executive Housekeeper for the 486-key iconic Dubai Marina landmark. She brings over 28 years of international housekeeping experience, including over five years with The Wyndham Hotel Group. Hameed has previously taken on multiple hotel pre-openings in both Middle East and Africa.



**Cyprus visa centre in Abu Dhabi**

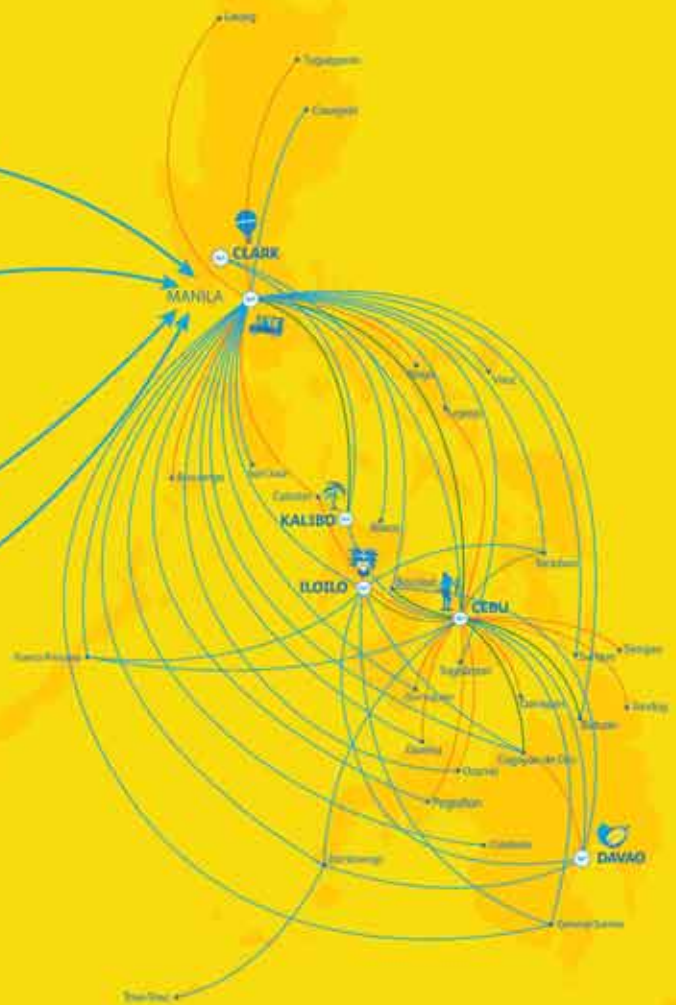
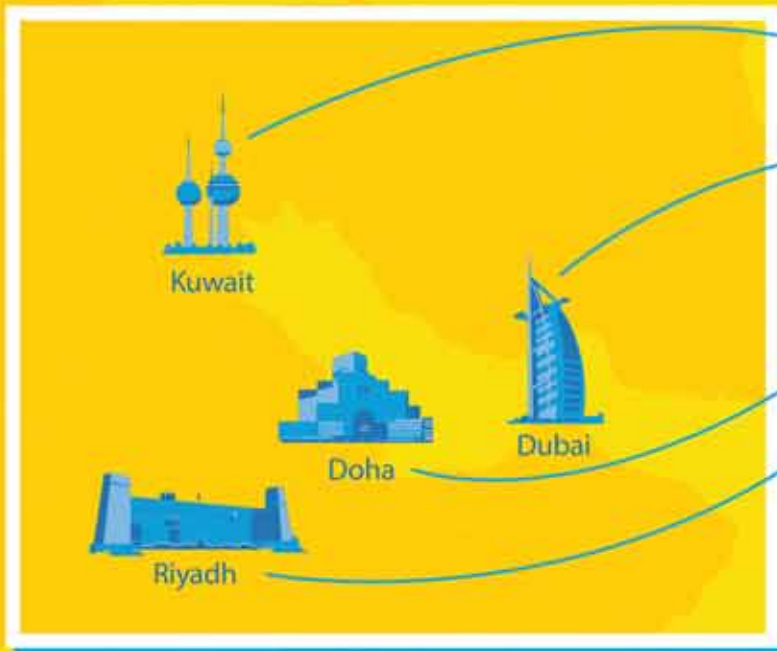
His Excellency **Vasilis Polemitts**, Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus to the United Arab Emirates, inaugurating the Cyprus Visa Application Centre in Abu Dhabi. Abu Dhabi becomes the second city after Dubai from where applicants can apply for a visa to Cyprus. Services at this location commenced from April 06, 2016. VFS Global offers visa services for 24 client governments in the UAE, since commencing operations in the country in 2004. VFS Global currently serves the Government of the Republic of Cyprus in 4 countries from 17 visa application centres globally.





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